

**HARFORD
COUNTY
2004
MASTER PLAN
and
LAND USE
ELEMENT PLAN**

MAY, 2004

As Amended

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: HARFORD COUNTY MASTER PLAN

The actions necessary for achieving long term goals in Harford County are directed by policies established in the Master Plan. The Master Plan, along with the Land Use Element Plan, provides direction for addressing future growth, revitalization, the provision of adequate public facilities, economic development and the preservation and protection of natural resources, agricultural lands and historic resources. In addition, the “Visions” of the Maryland Economic Growth, Resource Protection, and Planning Act of 1992 and the Smart Growth Initiatives are incorporated as a cornerstone to the policies within this Plan. Public input and understanding is essential for the successful accomplishment of the Plan's actions.

The Master Plan begins by defining the relationship between the Land Use Element Plan and the other element plans. A Community Facilities element along with an updated Rural element have been added to the 2004 Land Use Element Plan. The other element plans will be updated concurrently, to ensure consistency with the initiatives outlined in the Land Use Element Plan. This is a first step in developing a consolidated Comprehensive Plan.

The Maryland Economic Growth, Resource Protection, and Planning Act of 1992 combined with the State’s Smart Growth Initiatives have focused planning efforts toward growth management and resource protection. Harford County has accepted the State’s challenge and efforts are made to continue to implement these goals.

The basis for the Master Plan may be summed up in the following Guiding Principles, which will form the framework for development of the Land Use Element Plan and the other element plans:

Quality-of-Life - Harford County is dedicated to achieving a high quality-of-life by providing superior educational facilities, an acceptable functioning transportation network, adequate community and public facilities, safe and sustainable communities, the preservation of our resources, and an array of recreational and entertainment opportunities.

Stewardship of Our Resources - Harford County recognizes the value of our agricultural, natural, historical, and cultural resources. The preservation of these resources is important in nurturing a sense of our uniqueness and solidifying our identity.

Growth Management - Harford County enhances the integrity and vitality of every community. Inside the Development Envelope, strong support is given for locating appropriate locations for residential and nonresidential development supported by public utilities. The protection and integrity of existing communities outside the Development Envelope are strongly supported with no provision for new public utilities.

Redevelopment and Revitalization – Harford County supports the creative reuse of vacant and underutilized sites and structures as a means to enhance the vitality of existing communities, while preserving undeveloped lands.

A Sound, Balanced, and Diversified Local Economy – The County actively supports established industrial, commercial, and agricultural enterprises while seeking to attract other businesses to broaden its economic base.

Commitment to Communities - Harford County is dedicated to providing a forum for a broad spectrum of local viewpoints on such matters as land use, zoning, budget decisions, and current development and for strengthening individual community identities.

Coordination Among Agencies - Harford County actively pursues a policy of cooperation among agencies, which ultimately results in streamlining government processes, reducing conflicts, and achieving regulatory consistency.

The State of Maryland requires a system of coordinated planning efforts for all jurisdictions. Harford County supports proactive interjurisdictional coordination at the local, municipal, federal, and regional level as a means to create shared visions and reach common goals. In order to coordinate planning efforts, Harford County Government initiated an Intergovernmental Task Force on Smart Growth in 2000. The County, along with the three municipalities, created a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that outlined the objectives and tasks each jurisdiction would observe to coordinate municipal development and policy plans with Harford County's efforts.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: LAND USE ELEMENT PLAN

The 2004 Land Use Element Plan provides the primary direction for achieving the Master Plan's guiding principles. The Plan will set the framework for the County's policies on land use and related issues. During the preparation of this Land Use Element, the public participation process provided a means to gain information on an array of issues that make up the Plan. This process consisted of kickoff meetings to educate and inform the general public and to solicit input on what citizens believed to be the main issues to be addressed by the Plan. Six topical areas were identified: Designated Growth Areas, Redevelopment and Revitalization, Community Facilities, Preservation, Natural Resources, and Economic Development. The results were tabulated and the top five issues in each category to be addressed in the Plan were identified. Citizens were later asked to participate in workshops to answer a series of questions relating to the top five issues identified at the kickoff meetings. In addition, participants were asked to offer comments on the uniqueness and similarities of their communities. These common issues, balanced with each community's individuality, have provided guidance for a county-wide vision on land use.

The concept of the Development Envelope as a growth management tool was first introduced in the 1977 Harford County Master Plan. For this Plan, the Development Envelope was evaluated to assure consistency with the 1992 Economic Growth, Resource Conservation, and Planning Act, Smart Growth Initiatives, and interjurisdictional agreements. The Development Envelope concept is maintained in this Plan. Population projections for the County reflect an expected increase of 48,250 people between 2005 and 2025. During this time the number of households Countywide is projected to increase by 26,360 with 74% of the households expected to be located within the existing Development Envelope. The land use designations and policies put forth in this Plan are designed to accommodate this projected growth.

Designated Growth Areas are planned to accommodate new development and revitalization. Harford County's Designated Growth Areas are defined in accordance with the State's Smart Growth Initiative and include the Development Envelope, the three municipalities, nine designated rural villages, areas designated for economic development, as well as, the HEAT Center, and Harford Community College.

Redevelopment is an important aspect of the development cycle. For the 2004 Land Use Element Plan, Harford County has made a commitment to have stable residential and commercial communities. Protecting and enhancing the character of existing neighborhoods, providing important community facilities and ensuring pedestrian connections within developments are some of the key components outlined in this Plan. To achieve a quality living environment, there must be a commitment to recognizing and protecting existing neighborhoods, and to allocating public facilities based on community need. These recommendations will help provide for a stable population base within new and established neighborhoods and will encourage commitment and involvement by residents in their communities.

The Community Facilities portion of the Land Use Plan is designed to highlight the importance of providing adequate facilities to support residential, industrial and commercial development in a manner that does not compromise existing services. Community facilities include water and sewer systems, transportation, solid waste facilities, schools, libraries, parks and open space, and sheriff, fire and emergency operations. Establishment of a new revenue source along with changes to the Zoning Code are among the tools that will be used by the County to provide needed facilities in a manner consistent with this Plan.

Harford County's heritage has been an important component of the County's land use strategies for many years. This heritage is based not only on historic sites, structures, and landscapes, but also on a strong agricultural economy that contributes to the economic health and vitality of the County. Harford County maintains a strong commitment to retaining a viable agricultural industry. The County recognizes the importance of preserving its heritage by establishing policies that are designed to manage growth, while also preserving farmland and historic resources. Since the beginning of preservation efforts in Harford County over 35,000 acres have been preserved. The goal for the County is to preserve an additional 20,000 acres by the year 2012. Cluster development, with easements, shall be explored as another means to maximize the amount of land protected as open space, buffers, or active farmland. The County's transfer of development rights (TDR) provisions, in terms of the agriculture zoning classification of the Zoning Code, will be revisited.

The County recognizes that its unique and plentiful natural resources are a necessity for the quality of life that is desirable to residents and visitors. From its many streams and rivers emptying into the Chesapeake Bay, to its mineral resources supplying materials to the economic development of the region, the County's natural resources are valuable assets that contribute to the quality of life of its residents. The County recognizes the importance of protecting its drinking water supplies. The County will adopt comprehensive wellhead protection regulations within designated aquifer recharge areas and water supply areas in order to protect the quality and quantity of these resources.

Harford County's economic development program promotes business growth and new investment that generates valuable employment opportunities and supports the development of a sustainable, dynamic economy over the long-term. Specifically, this effort is aimed at capitalizing on the County's strategic mid-Atlantic location within the I-95 corridor and proximity to regional assets located in the Baltimore metropolitan region. Efforts to encourage technology development are guided by the Technology Development Strategic Plan. Making the most of existing infrastructure, strategic location and available tax incentive programs are producing positive results for the U.S. 40 corridor. Location is key for the economic development opportunities on the Perryman peninsula. A vision plan has been prepared for this area that embraces advances in technology, communication, transportation, and environmental conservation.

To facilitate the location of prime employment opportunities and maximize the value of the I-95 interchanges, the County includes a Mixed Office land use category. This designation will provide additional employment opportunities at the MD 543 and MD 22 interchanges of I-95 and

will provide a positive step in accommodating quality employment for County residents while still maintaining the quality of surrounding neighborhoods.

Harford County introduced Community Areas in the 1996 Plan to help ensure that each community area remains attractive and livable with a strong local identity. This concept is carried further in this plan. The plan for each community will serve as a guide for the development of the area, and will serve as a continuing communication link between citizens and the County government.

The 2004 Land Use Element Plan provides a vision for land use in Harford County. Implementation necessitates the continuation of cooperative planning initiatives to reinforce the sense of community so important to Harford County. The implementation section of this plan identifies which County agency(s) will be primarily responsible for each implementation strategy and its relative priority.

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ACRONYMS

APF - Adequate Public Facilities
AMTRAK - American Trail - National Railroad Passenger Corporation
APG - Aberdeen Proving Ground
BNR - Biological Nutrient Reduction
BRTB - Baltimore Regional Transportation Board
CI - Commercial Industrial
CONRAIL - Consolidated Rail Corporation
CRD - Commercial Revitalization District
CSX - Chessie and Seaboard Railroads
DARE - Drug Abuse Resistance Education
DGA - Designated Growth Areas
EDAB - Economic Development Advisory Board
EMS - Emergency Medical Services
ENOD - Edgewood Neighborhood Overlay District
EOC - Emergency Operations Center
FIDS - Forest Interior Dwelling Bird Species
GI - General Industrial
HAZMAT - Hazardous Materials
HCC - Harford Community College
HCTS - Harford County Transportation Services
HEAT - Higher Education and Applied Technology
HCPS - Harford County Public Schools
IDA - Intensely Developed Areas
LDA - Limited Development Areas
LOS - Level of Service
MARC - Maryland Rail Commuter
MDE - Maryland Department of the Environment
MGD - Million Gallons per Day
MO - Mixed Office
MOU - Memorandum of Understanding
MTA - Maryland Transit Authority
NREP - Natural Resources Element Plan
OED - Office of Economic Development
PAL - Police Athletic League
PFA - Priority Funding Areas
POS - Program Open Space
RCA - Resource Conservation Areas
SAIC - Science Applications International Corporation
SSPRA - Sensitive Species Program Review Areas
TDR - Transfer of Development Rights
VB - Village Business

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